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SUBJECT: Afghan Clean Energy and Water Supply Programs: Meeting
Community Needs and Achieving COIN Effects

REF: Kabul 2670

¶1. Summary: This message summarizes two new USAID programs addressing critical energy and water needs that will rely on Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) officers to identify and prioritize specific projects in the field. These two programs are flexible, responding to on-the-ground, demand-driven assessments that reflect community needs and are tied directly to counter-insurgency effects. At the Embassy, our national-level working groups are coordinating this assistance to avoid duplication of effort while leveraging PRT knowledge with USAID, State, and military budgets. In addition, we are tracking the regional distribution of these projects to identify and address the needs of any underserved populations, thereby avoiding the creation of developmental "blind spots" that could constitute recruitment areas for insurgent groups. End Summary.

Clean Energy and Sustainable Water Supply

¶2. USAID's new Afghan Clean Energy Program (ACEP, USD 83 million over four years) and Sustainable Water Supply and Sanitation project (SWSS, USD 52 million over three years) will support efforts by Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and other key stakeholders throughout Afghanistan to help the needs of Afghan communities. ACEP and SWSS will design, install and operate renewable energy sources (solar, wind, and micro-hydro), sustainable potable water systems, sanitation facilities and hygiene education. Activities will focus primarily on rural areas, and local communities working with PRT staff will propose projects.

Technical Assistance Team Provides Engineering Expertise

¶3. Based on the initial SWSS and ACEP site selection criteria, PRTs will propose projects to their respective Regional Commands (RC). Nominations are to be submitted quarterly; over a dozen renewable energy activities have already been submitted and nearly 50 water and sanitation activities. RC/East has been particularly active. Among these are solar power for a rural clinic, cold storage facilities run by micro-hydro power to support agricultural sales, wind turbines for domestic lighting and small industry development, many water supply and latrine construction projects. PRT officers have reported that CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program) funds and community labor are available to support these projects.

¶4. Project coordinators will favor projects that leverage funds from other sources. A USAID technical assistance team will visit approved sites to gather additional information and develop an annual work plan. Each project site will have an agreement describing roles and responsibilities of USAID, the PRT, local community and other stakeholders. Local communities must operate and maintain the systems, and sustainability will require good commercial practices (i.e., communities must collect fees to pay ongoing expenses).

Infrastructure Working Group

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¶5. The Mission's multi-agency Infrastructure Working Group (IWG) coordinates input from PRTs, local communities and other key stakeholders in the design and implementation of infrastructural project activities. The IWG will also ensure its activities mesh with other Mission strategic objectives, including anti-corruption efforts. A core group of the Kabul IWG met recently with RC-South civilian and military representatives in Kandahar and with RC-East representatives in Bagram. Inclusive IWG participation will allow for better leverage of USAID, State and military budgets while avoiding duplication of effort.

Comment

¶6. As PRT officers arrive in the field on an almost daily basis, these programs make the most of officers' local knowledge and influence. These two programs are the first of a new generation of programs that respond to on-the-ground, demand-driven assessments that reflect community needs and are tied directly to counter-insurgency effects. We will be working intensively with PRTs to track the distribution of projects launched under these programs to ensure they do not create underserved population groups that could constitute recruitment areas for insurgent groups.

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